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THE STANDARDIZATION OF ERROR

BY

VILHJALMUR STEFANSSON, M.A., LL.D.

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THE STANDARDIZATION OF ERROR

THE STANDARDIZATION OF ERROR

PART I

THE BASIC THEORY

It is said that Bacon considered all knowledge his province. But the sciences of to-day are so many and complex that a single Baconian view of them is no longer possible, and perversions of thought and action result because our intellectual horizon has been narrowed to a part of the field. From a realization of this have come various attempts to co-ordinate the sciences to permit a unifying view of the whole. The French philosopher, Comte, made one of these a century ago in his Positive Philosophy. There have been many since.

But if we pause to state clearly the case against the standardization of knowledge, the essential absurdity becomes so patent that we have to recall the numerous failures to convince ourselves that anyone was ever foolish enough even to try it.

Consider for instance the physiology of the human skin or the composition of a dust nebula. In these fields, among others, the accepted facts of a dozen years ago have become the error and

folk-lore of to-day. You standardize knowledge, and while you are at the job the knowledge changes. Long before the thing can be adequately done it has ceased being worth doing at all.

Then why are we continually attempting this hopeless task? Partly, let us say, from irrepressible human optimism, which leads us to think that any desirable thing is possible. Partly, also, because of unclear analogizing from fields that seem related but are not. One of these analogies is from business. If you have on hand, on July 1st, a pair of socks, you will have them still on hand on August 1st, or else cash in your till to correspond, assuming honest and successful management. But, in spite of unlimited honesty and efficiency, you have no guarantee that an idea on hand on July 1st may not have been simply removed by August 1st without any equivalent remaining on hand. You may have discovered that month, for instance, reasonable assurance that the moon is *not* made of green cheese, without being able to get any clear idea as to what it *is* made of.

The reader may here jump to the conclusion that we are arriving at a philosophy of pessimistic hopelessness. That is not the way of the true philosopher. His ideal is the *tabula rasa.* He sweeps away the systems of others, that he may build his own on a smooth foundation.

Realizing simultaneously the insatiable craving of the human mind for order and the impos-

sibility of bringing order into the chaos of knowledge, we appear to be faced with a dilemma no less distressing than insoluble. But on looking deeper we find the dilemma apparent only. This will become clear when we consider the essential nature of knowledge.

The thoughtless among us may speak, for instance, of a red cow, and naïvely imagine we could prove our point with the testimony of a witness or two. But the philosophers have long ago made it clear that a cow would not be red but for the presence of someone to whom it looks red. Having established that point, the deeper of the philosophers go on to prove that the cow would not only not be red, but would not even exist, were it not for the presence of someone who thinks he sees a cow. In our argument the position is even stronger than this, for we have two lines of defense. First, we agree with the philosopher that you cannot prove of any given cow that it is red, or even that it exists at all; secondly, we insist that an idea is so much less stable than a cow that, even were the philosophers wrong about the cow not being red, they might easily be right about an idea not being right, or not existing. Take an example. The philosophers of the Middle Ages demonstrated both that the earth did not exist and also that it was flat. To-day they are still arguing about whether the world exists, but they no longer dispute about whether it is flat. This shows the greater lasting power of a real thing (whether it

exists or not, for that point has not yet been settled) as compared with an idea, which may not only not exist, but may also be wrong even if it does exist.

We have now come in our discussion to the point where we see the absurdity of supposing ourselves to have any knowledge, as knowledge is ordinarily defined—or at least we would have come to that point but for lack of space which prevents us from making the subject really clear. However, it doesn't matter from a practical point of view whether you have followed this philosophical reasoning. Perhaps you are not a philosopher. In that case, and in the homely phrase of the day, I ask you, what's the good of an Englishman's learning, first, that all Americans speak through their noses and, secondly, why they do so, when he has to find out eventually that they do not? What's the good, again, of knowing that central Australia is a desert and that certain principles of physiography make it so, when you may have to listen to an after-dinner speech by someone telling that it is not a desert?

Such things do not always go in triplets of (1) so it is, (2) why it is, and (3) it is not—but that is a common order.

The reader may here protest that we are not getting much nearer our promised emancipation from the dilemma between our passion for system and the impossibility of systematizing knowledge. We have hinted above that the solution

lies in finding a new basis for knowledge, and this we now proceed to do.

So long as you believe in them, the nasality of American speech and the desert nature of central Australia are fragments of knowledge capable of being arranged in a system. The trouble comes when you discover that they are "untrue."

This gives the solution of our problem. We must have knowledge that is incapable of being contradicted. On first thought this seems impossible, but on second thought we realize that such facts do exist in the domain of mathematics. Two and two make four.

But why do two and two make four? Obviously because we have agreed that four is the name for the sum of two and two. That principle has been applied in mathematics to such advantage that it is rightly called the science of sciences; and this is the principle which, now at length, we propose to apply to all knowledge. Through it every science will become a pure science, and all knowledge as open to systematization as mathematics.

The trouble with facts, outside mathematics, has been inherent in the method of gathering information. We call these methods *observation* and *experiment,* and have even been proud of them—not realizing their clumsy nature, the unreliability of the findings, the transient character of the best of them, and the essential hopelessness of classifying the results and thus gratify-

ing the passion of the human intellect for order and symmetry in the universe.

Take an example. A man comes from out-of-doors with the report that there is a red cow in the front yard. Neglecting for the moment the philosophical aspect of the case—as to whether the cow would be red if there were no one to whom she seemed red, and also the more fundamental problem of whether there would have been any cow at all if no one had gone out to look—neglecting, as I say, the deeper aspects of the case, we are confronted with numerous other sources of error. The observer may have confused the sex of the animal. Perhaps it was an ox. Or if not the sex, the age may have been misjudged, and it may have been a heifer. The man may have been colour-blind, and the cow (wholly apart from the philosophical aspect) may not have been red. And even if it was a red cow, the dog may have seen her the instant our observer turned his back, and by the time he told us she was in the front yard, she may in reality have been vanishing in a cloud of dust down the road.

The trouble lies evidently in our clumsy system of observing and reporting. This difficulty has been obviated in the science of mathematics. A square is, not by observation but by definition, a four-sided figure with equal sides and equal angles. No one has denied that and no one can, for the simple reason that we have all agreed in advance that we will never deny it. Nay more,

we have agreed that if anyone says that a square has three or five sides we will all reply in chorus: "If it has three or five sides it is not a square!" That disposes of the matter forever.

Why not agree similarly on the attributes of a front yard?—making it true by definition that, among other things, it contains a red cow. Then if anyone asserts, for reasons of philosophy, colour-blindness, or the officiousness of dogs, that there is no red cow in the yard, we can reply, as in the case of the square: "If it does not contain a red cow, it is not a front yard!"

The author feels at this point a doubtless unwarranted concern that he is not being taken seriously. Or perhaps the plan proposed is not considered practical. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The thing has been tried, and successfully—not in the systematic way now proposed, but sporadically. Some instances are well known and convincing.

Take the assertion that a Christian is a good man. If you attempt to deny this on the ground that Jones, a deacon in the church, ran off with some public funds, your stricture is at once shown to have been absurd by the simple reply: "If Jones was a thief, he was *not* a Christian." A Christian is, not by observation but by definition, a good man; if you prove that a certain man was not good you merely show that he was not a Christian. Thus we have established once and for ever the fact that a Christian is a good man. It is like a square having four sides.

But if someone asserts that a Bolshevik, a Conservative, or a chemist is a good man, you can soon confute him; for the members of these classes have neglected to define themselves as good. Thus their attributes have to be determined by observation and experiment (after you have first run the gauntlet of the philosophers who ask whether the Bolsheviks could be good without the presence of someone who considers them good, and further whether any Bolsheviks would exist at all but for certain people who think they exist). It is highly probable that evidence could be brought against almost any given Bolshevik and even some Conservatives to show that they are not good men. At any rate we have here no such clarity of issue as in things that are true by definition—as the four-sidedness of a square or the goodness of a Christian.

Through some experience of arguing this case in the abstract I have learned that its essential reasonableness can best be established from concrete examples. Let us, then, take cases at random from various fields of knowledge.

Consider first the ostriches of Africa. These birds have been studied in the wild by sportsmen and zoologists, and as domestic animals by husbandmen who tend them in flocks like sheep. There are accordingly thousands of printed pages in our libraries giving what purports to be information upon their habits. Besides being indefinite and in many ways otherwise faulty, this alleged information is in part contradictory.

Having studied the bird of Africa, let us turn next to the ostrich of literature, philosophy, and morals. Instead of the confusion in the case of the ostrich of zoology, we have clarity and precision. This is because the ostrich of literature exists by definition only. He is a bird that hides his head when frightened. You may too precipitately object that men would not accept universally this definition of the ostrich of literature if it did not fit also the zoological ostrich. The answer is that the definition has never received any support from zoologists, hunters, or owners of the domesticated birds, and yet it has been accepted universally throughout Europe since Pliny's time (about 50 B.C.). It has survived all attacks from science and from the bigoted common-sense of those who did not recognize its true nature. Like the definition of a four-sided square or a good Christian, it has survived because it was useful. Can you imagine any real attribute more instructive than the head-burying of the ostrich-by-definition? As a text for moralists, as an epithet that politicians use for their opponents, as a figure of speech generally, what could serve as well? Our literature is richer, our vocabulary more picturesque through this beneficent bird of hypothesis. He has many inherent advantages that no real bird could have. Since his habits are defined we need not waste time studying him first hand, nor in trying to adjudicate at second hand between books about him that disagree. Since he never existed as a

beast he is in no danger of the extinction that is said to threaten the lion and swan.

Consider next what trouble we should get into if we did not have the literary ostrich and wanted to convey picturesquely the idea of that sort of wilful blindness from which we ourselves never suffer, but which curiously afflicts our opponents. In pursuit of suitable analogy we might vainly canvass the whole animal kingdom. The ostrich-by-definition is, therefore, not only less trouble to deal with than a real bird; he is actually more useful and instructive than any real bird or beast. When we consider how often he has been used in sermon and precept we must admit that this model creature has contributed substantially, not only to the entertainment and instruction of nations, but also to the morality and general goodness of the world.

The ostrich is but one of several useful birds of definition. But we must be careful not to confuse these with real birds or their value is lessened. An example is the stork that brings babies. By a confusion of thought which identifies this stork with real storks, and through the pernicious birth-control propaganda which insists on rationalizing everything, the baby-bringing stork has ceased to be useful except in conversation with children, in the symbolism of the movie, and in the picture post-card industry.

The wolves of literature are among the most picturesque and useful of our definitions. Zoological wolves go in pairs or families, never

above a dozen. It is obvious how inadequate this would be for modern movie purposes, where they should run in packs of scores or hundreds. Even in a novel or short story of Siberia or Canada you need packs large enough for the hero to kill fifteen or twenty, with enough left over to eat or to be about to eat his sweetheart. This is easily accomplished by employing a wolf of the general type we advocate—having no relation to the so-called realities but possessing by definition all the required characteristics (habit of running in packs of any desired size, willingness to eat, or attempt to eat, the heroine, etc.).

Another useful definition has long been that of Arctic, Canadian, and Siberian cold. The danger and disadvantage of confusing this hypothetical with a so-called real climate are best seen if we compare the facility with which people who have never been in these countries use the weather in conversation, speeches, and books, and contrast that facility with the awkwardness of travellers and natives. An example is a story by Tolstoi. Great as he was, he failed to realize the advantage in simplicity and vividness of postulating that Siberia is always cold, and actually allowed himself to be led into the artistic blunder of having the convicts in one of his novels die of sunstroke. An acquaintance of mine was filming this story. He realized the pictorial ease of "putting over" drifting snow as compared with heat waves—the snow could be managed with confetti and an aeroplane propeller, but how

would one photograph heat waves? But he realized still more clearly that the public is wedded to the defined, as opposed to the "real" climate of Siberia, and did what Tolstoi would have done in the first place had he lived in London —changed the scene from summer to winter, and then froze to death as many convicts as the picture required.

These few examples from among many will suffice to show not only that the method of knowledge-by-definition is and long has been in standard use, but also that it has the advantages of being easily grasped, picturesque, and of a higher average moral value than the so-called "real" knowledge. It is inherent in the genesis and nature of defined facts that they can be made picturesque in proportion to the ingenuity of the one who defines them, and as moral as necessary. This is a striking advantage over empirical knowledge, which cannot always be relied on to support the fashion of the time or even the moral system of the community.

It is from this last point of view that there has grown up in many countries of recent years a profound distrust of "facts" and the theories deduced from them. In England such theories are dealt with by the simple and adequate way of paying little attention to the exposition of "new" things. In the United States it has been found that the public listens even to the newest views, and sometimes actually wants to act upon them. This has necessitated the expedient of

passing laws prescribing what may and may not be advocated and believed. These American laws are a step in the right direction, but inadequate because they do not have back of them any but specific moral considerations. Few people as yet realize the general reasons of expediency and broad sanity that lie back of the scheme we are here proposing.

Let us consider next a sample or two of knowledge-by-definition that could well be added to our present stock. Just as artificial tongues are built upon spoken tongues but avoid their mistakes, so may we conveniently base our knowledge-by-definition, or absolute knowledge, on what is already believed by some.

Assume, for instance, that all Irishmen are peasants holding land by insecure tenure from grasping landlords, that each has a pig under his bed, that everyone carries shillalahs, that kissing the Blarney Stone is the chief national occupation. Having agreed on these things, we could teach them in the schools of all countries. We should then presently all agree (on the basis of common facts) as to what our attitude toward Ireland should be, and the troublesome Irish Question would disappear from politics and history.

Think, too, what a charm the new system would lend to travel in Ireland! So soon as you landed you would note the rarity or absence of all the things you had expected. You would meet surprise after surprise, which would not

only delight you at the time but would give you material for endless letters home and for endless stories to tell when you got back. Thus would be built up an increasing tourist traffic, a source of revenue to Ireland itself and to the shipping and tourist companies of the various nations.

You may think such tourists, on coming home, would upset our system of facts-by-definition about Ireland. Not if that system is once thoroughly established. Consider in that relation the Greek pronouncement that at any time of year it becomes colder the farther north you go. North America is in language and civilization a homogeneous country in which one might think knowledge would therefore spread rapidly, and in which Atlanta, Richmond, New York, and Montreal are, and have been for a century, large and well-known cities that are by observation about equally hot in July. Yet there is even to-day practically unanimous adherence in all these cities to the Greek definition ("the farther north the colder at any time of year"), and each city believes those farther south to be hotter and those farther north to be colder, though thousands of travellers for a hundred years have found it to be uniformly otherwise. The ostrich with his head in the sand has survived two thousand years and is still "going strong." No human being can retain oil, but the hypothetical Eskimo drinks it by the flagon in our books and belief, and is none the worse for it. Then why should not all the world forever believe that every

Irishman has a pig under his bed? All parties would benefit. It would be only the hypothetical Irishman that has the pig, and we could by hypothesis arrange that he should thoroughly enjoy it. The real Irishman would get the benefit of the increased tourist trade and surely he ought to be grateful. The tourist would make facile discovery of the non-existence of the pig; that would please him and interest all his friends for ever after as a sort of occult knowledge, like knowing privately that Indian fakirs are really no more clever than our conjurers, a pleasing secret now possessed and highly valued by many without detriment to the fakirs or to those who prefer to say they have seen them do marvels. Thus would everyone be the gainer.

PART II

THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION

THE most striking contradiction of our civilization is the fundamental reverence for truth which we profess and the thorough-going disregard for it which we practice. This is the veriest commonplace. The lowest journalism fattens on pointing it out and the highest clergy prosper in the same occupation. According to them all, the world is rotten to the core with hypocrisy and falsehood.

But while they agree on the condition, the physicians of the world order differ on the remedy, hopelessly. Without disagreeing on the condition, either, we want to suggest nevertheless that it is a bit naïve of the philosophers to diagnose from the mere scarcity of truth that the world is sick with an incurable malady. Is it not just possible that they can not cure us for the basic reason that we are not ill?

And if we are not ill, the worries of the moralists should dissolve into good cheer. Can we, then, be well though the truth be not in us? Strangely late in the history of philosophy, we now for the first time address ourselves to that problem.

God and Truth have from the earliest times been the two ideas that have commanded the

greatest reverence. They have been much argued by the philosophers, with many curious parallels and one striking contrast. Typical of the parallels are the long disputes about whether there can reasonably be supposed to exist either an absolute god or an absolute truth. The one contrast is that while the philosophers have discussed at great length whether God is good, they have never discussed whether Truth is good. Is is not a bit suspicious that this is the one thing they have always assumed? And in a world of chaotic philosophies that get us nowhere, is it not high time to ask if there be any sound reason why Truth should be exempted from that fundamental scrutiny to which even the gods have had to submit?

In addressing ourselves to this hitherto neglected question, as to whether truth is good, we adopt in the first instance a test which has long appealed to the common sense of mankind: *By their fruits shall ye know them.*

In defining our subject, we admit at once that the truth may have effects outside of the immediate field in which we shall study it, that of human affairs. It is like the question of soul. For thousands of years the civilization which is intellectually descended from the lands around the Mediterranean has agreed that all men have souls. Usually those who speculated have considered that women have souls also, a few that horses and dogs have souls, and the most generous that all animals have them. But it is only

the highest intellectuals and the most benighted savages who have ever conceded souls to plants and sticks and stones. We shall ignore, for the time being, such possible extensions of our subject, and discuss Truth solely in its relation to men (including women).

As both definition and defense of our method, we premise, further, that mankind frequently does much better than it knows. Nearly all of us, for instance, can keep in balance as we walk along upright, though the physiologists are still arguing about exactly how we do it. Similarly, the biologists tacitly agree that we know what life is; for they test their definitions of life by measuring them against the reality which they feel they know, though they cannot define it quite successfully.

Go through any considerable number of examples like the preceding, selecting them, if you like, from every sphere of life, and you will gradually reach a firm confidence in the reasonableness of human actions as compared with the flightiness of our theories and the contradictions so frequently involved in our explanations. That may be because (admitting the evolutionary theory and the geological time scale) we, and the pre-human ancestors from which we inherit our traits, have been acting so as to save our bodies and reach our desires for a good many million years longer than we have been speculating on how to save our souls and protect our reputations. And practice makes perfect.

We arrive then at a simple problem: If we ignore all theories and study those instances where mankind has preferred truth or falsehood the one to the other, we shall be in a position to determine which set of choices has been of the greater benefit.

In a later and more rigorous inquiry we may go in for objective proofs, like statistics. Here we shall use only such examples as are well known to everyone, so that the conclusions we state shall certainly be merely the equivalent of the reader's own verdict, set before him in print.

Few things are more generally admitted than that parents, in most cases, love their children and desire their greatest good. These parents may be in error as to what constitutes good, but this is beside the mark, for we are at the moment merely trying to find out what it is they think is for the children's welfare. Of course, if you ask them, they will quote you Truth with a capital, or more likely TRUTH all in capitals. For so have they been taught to protest. But study their actions, which are a surer guide than their words.

THE CASE OF INFANTS

To put it bluntly, most loving parents take the greatest care to surround children not with truth but with deception.

We cannot deceive children before they are born, so we do the next best thing and practice

every deception about them. We conceal, not only from children but also from grown persons so far as possible, how babies come into the world. The marriage is announced, and even made a public occasion, but thereafter everything is mystery. Pregnancy is concealed by an artful dress, the expectant mother hides or goes to a remote place. In some classes of society it is rather a breach of etiquette if the doctor talks openly about whom he is going to attend that night. There is a blare of publicity after the birth, in which, however, only a few things may be told—the weight and sex of the child, whom it looks like, and in a very general way how the mother is doing. But the fact that the child looks red and wrinkled, that its eyes do not focus, and several other details about it, are so much not the thing to talk about that many mothers discover these and other more "intimate" things only in their own children. And certainly to most fathers the newborn looks as surprising as it looks unpleasant. That, by the way, is a fact every parent must conceal—it would be dreadful if anyone were ever to find out what a disagreeable shock his firstborn was to him.

The reader may here want to stop and argue with the author that all this is but decent and proper reticence—which if he does he pleases the author very much. For there would be nothing to argue about. The author, too, feels that this is how all these things should be. He certainly would hate to break any such taboos.

But let us not argue one way or the other. To do so would be unscientific. We should pursue our inquiry with a steady view to just one thing: Is it true that the majority of people feel and do as stated? From that survey will emerge a general conclusion as to which it is that men really prefer in practice, truth or falsehood.

The systematic deception of the child usually begins almost at the moment of birth. The instrument is speech, most fittingly, since our studies will show us that this is the favorite means of deception throughout life. The child does not understand any words, at first, and balks the mother thereby. However, she makes capital of this dilemma by seeing to it that her baby shall chiefly hear (and therefore learn) only incorrect speech. This is known as teaching the child "baby talk."

There are certain standard forms of baby talk which, through wide usage, are not completely deceptive; as when the child is taught to say that papa has gone bye-bye when the meaning is that papa has gone out. Accordingly, most mothers invent a special jargon so that each child grows up with several dozen sounds or combinations of sounds which are either not words of any language or else are real words with perverted meanings.

As the child grows up he discovers that he has been deceived in the first speech taught him, and thus he gets an early and healthy lesson in one of the main concerns of life—how to deceive others.

As soon as the child has acquired a vocabulary by which he can be misled, people begin to deceive him in ways that increase in complexity with his growing faculties. Many of these are specially devised by his mother and family and do not lend themselves to sociological study, for they are seldom placed on record. But there is a general system, one broad aspect of which is stories, especially classics, that fall under the heads of fairy tales and folklore.

There has come to my attention recently a very practical way of determining what people really think of the place of folklore in the education of the young. As there has been prejudice to guard against, I need to describe the manner of my investigation before I come to the matter of it.

In a very tentative and general conversation I casually introduce the subject of bolshevism. In three cases out of four there is an immediate hostile reaction, and then I go no further, for my desire has been to get an opinion on a reported bolshevik undertaking, and a person who bristles at their very name is certain to be opposed to anything they sponsor. Correspondingly I get in some cases reactions of favorable enthusiasm, and these are equally hopeless, for they would naturally support any part of the bolshevik program.

In the few cases of seeming freedom from bias, I proceed to retail, without vouching for it, what I have heard about certain educational

experiments now being conducted in Russia. It really makes no difference about the truth of these reports, for a person scientific enough to be neither strongly pro- nor strongly anti-bolshevik is also intelligent enough to consider a hypothetical case and give the same sort of verdict he would if it were a real one.

It is said, then, that the Russian powers believe in the maxim of Paul about proving all things and accepting only those that can stand the most rigid investigation. I do not know (I must say, since the subject has been brought up) whether the bolsheviks are trying to discourage baby-talk, insisting that mothers shall speak a real language even to the youngest child; but it has been represented to me that from the time the child begins to speak the government makes an effort to see that it is told only the truth.

One of the first things western mothers tell their children is all about Jack and the Beanstalk. The Russians feel reasonably certain that there never was such a Jack, and quite certain that there never was such a Beanstalk. Accordingly, neither that fabled youngster nor the fabled plant is ever mentioned, I am told, to the up-to-date bolshevik-sponsored child.

But, says the Russian, there are in real life things quite as interesting and marvelous as Jack and his stalk; for instance, a child named Tom instead of Jack, and surnamed Edison. Nothing very marvelous is reported about this Tommy while he was small, although he had a very good

time growing up. But when he became a sizeable boy, or perhaps even later, he got an idea about how a string could be heated till it became red and even white, and how this string could be put in a glass bottle and hung up to give a light much brighter than any lamp that ever existed up to that time.

The Russians are said to maintain that by applying the same ability and ingenuity to telling the story of Tom and the glowing string that has been used in popularizing the adventures of Jack and his Beanstalk, you could create an equally vivid story, equally entertaining and, they contend, more beneficial since it is "true."

In the case of a child taught to believe in the Beanstalk, it becomes necessary to tell him later (or else to let him find out for himself) that it never existed. Some psychologists claim that there is an injurious mental shock involved when a child's faith is shattered. What the bolsheviki emphasize is that if Jack had been real the child's interest would not have had to cease at the age of five or six, but would have continued growing until the larger boy gradually mastered all the history and later grasped the achievements of Jack. If, then, instead of Jack and the Beanstalk, you begin with Tom and the red-hot string, there is no shock, the bolsheviki argue, no dead halt, no shifting of interest from one thing to another, but instead a growing delight in the whole adventurous life of Thomas Alva Edison that finally develops into a grasp of all

the sciences with which he has been concerned.

I seldom get this far in my second-hand explanation before my listeners stop me with rhapsodies on the glories of the imagination and diatribes against the bolsheviks who now for the first time are seen by these previously impartial people to be insidious foemen of the soul.

This counterblast used to floor me and I would stop at that point; but more recently I have developed a flanking operation. People strong on the beauties of the soul are nearly always great admirers of Maeterlinck. So I apparently change the subject, falling in with their praise of the imagination and asking if they think its subtle beauties are anywhere more evident than in the great son of Belgium. There is usually agreement, and soon we are communing ecstatically together about his book on the bee.

The next step is to ask the champions of the imagination whether they remember that Maeterlinck says near the beginning of that book (which we have just agreed is one of his greatest works) that he has long since given up trying to invent anything half so marvelous as the truth. Oh, yes, they remember that, but they always understood it to mean Truth with a capital letter, which is something very different from a fact, and apparently means anything you are so fond of that you are prepared to stick to it whether it is true or not. But a little discussion about the sort of truth which Maeterlinck says he is trying to present in the Bee, and the

sort which the bolsheviks say they are trying to present about Edison, shows that both are of the same kind. This conclusion results in no increase of admiration for the bolsheviks but a noticeable decrease of liking for Maeterlinck, who apparently has been cheating some of his readers into thinking that he was telling them Truths when he was only telling facts.

Usually the outcome of the conversation is a feeling of how blessed are we whose imaginations have been stimulated and delighted by Little Red Riding Hood, Bluebeard with his many wives, and tales of that sort, and what an eclipse of the imagination is about to spread its shadow over Russia, where even little children have to be told the truth.

The bolshevik campaign against folklore in general has been paralleled by an American campaign for Santa Claus in particular, which shows the differing temper of the two countries. Santa, it is well known, drives reindeer. Now it happens that some friends of mine own a hundred thousand reindeer in Alaska and have been trying to find a market for them. Other friends of mine own and edit *The Kansas City Star,* one of the most respectable and respected newspapers in the United States. Roosevelt, after he had been President, thought it an honor to be one of its editors: and the standards of personnel, management and policy are quite as high now as then. My Alaskan friends are, in ideals and character, not below the level of even the *Star.*

However, they are not as well known, nor is their standing in the community as directly of business value to them. You might, therefore, possibly suspect them of using Santa Claus to help them find a reindeer market, no matter what they thought of the Saint himself. But surely the *Star,* whose business sense is as keen as its ethics are scrupulous, would not touch the enterprise unless its editors were sure of two things: that Santa was all right, for otherwise the *Star* would not associate with him even for profit; and that nearly everybody else thought Santa all right, otherwise the *Star* would not profit by associating with him.

The campaign was planned to deceive the children of Kansas City into believing that the real Santa with his real gift-bearing reindeer had entered into an arrangement to arrive in Kansas City some weeks before Christmas and to be on exhibition there. The *Star* organization were his alleged representatives and the part for which I was requisitioned by the Lomen Reindeer Corporation was to write to the kiddies a letter telling how I had visited Santa in his northern home and what message he had sent by me to the children of the United States. My letter would be printed on dozens of front pages, aggregating millions in circulation, for this was a nation-wide campaign handled by newspapers or department stores in many of the larger cities, such as Cleveland, Brooklyn, Denver, Oklahoma City, and I have forgotten what other places. The letter

I wrote was deceptive, though not literally untruthful. It was printed by all the papers engaged in the Real Santa campaign, and between me and a thousand other willing collaborators who all felt we were doing the nation's children a real service, we fooled them so thoroughly that the *Star* (to come back to that worthy paper) was able to stage a parade through the streets of Kansas City that was even larger, it was said, than the American Legion could muster when they held their National Convention in the same city the year before. The entire police force was needed to control the crowd. Some other cities did almost as well.

I have heard much comment on the campaign waged by the *Star,* and by the like-minded papers of other cities, and none has been unfavorable. I believe the mayor of Kansas City thanked the *Star* for a great public service—or something of that sort. But mayors do such things rather perfunctorily—whatever is done by a prominent enough citizen or foreigner, at that they publicly rejoice. But tradesmen are usually more hard-headed than that, and their chief organizations are discreet and particular to be always on the side of the common weal. But higher than any of our non-religious bodies in its ideals and aims is likely to be the Parent-Teacher Association of the city. Listen, then, to what they said in a display proclamation which occupied, in suitably large print, nearly a whole page of *The Kansas City Star* on Christmas Day, 1925:

To *The Kansas City Star:*

May we express our congratulations and appreciation to *The Star* on the wonderful success of its enterprise in bringing Santa Claus and his reindeer to Kansas City and acting as the host, friend and guide of the children's Christmas saint.

We believe all Kansas City and our neighboring towns share with us in our felicitation. It is nothing new for *The Star* to be generously mindful of the children at Christmas time. We have not forgotten "Snow White," "The Seven Swans" and "Peter Pan!" But this year Santa Claus and his reindeer have been brought "in person," have paraded our streets, visited our schools and hospitals and have taken their Christmas cheer directly to the children and to the older folk as well.

The Old Spirit of Christmas has been revived and stimulated, and everybody has been made happier and better by this Yuletide visit. With this Christmas Spirit in our hearts, we now think it most fitting to thank *The Star* publicity for its unique and happy achievement.

TO SANTA CLAUS AND
HIS HOST:

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND
THANK YOU

Merchants Association:
Parent-Teacher Association:
Chamber of Commerce

You agree with them, heartily, Gentle Reader, I am sure. And so do I. The pudgy Saint with his sleigh load of gifts and his eight reindeer is part of the glory and romance of childhood. You and I, when we were small and believed in him, saw with our mundane eyes nothing more than a jolly old man in a red coat with a krinkly smile and a flowing beard; the more blessed youngsters of today (thanks to the Lomen Corporation in Alaska and men of humanity and vision in our cities who co-operate with them), become personally acquainted with Dancer and Prancer, Dunder and Blixen, and all the other members of the famous team. They ride in the sleigh with Santa and they ride on the backs of his deer. They are thrilled by the no longer simulated (as in our day) interest of their parents who now stand shivering with cold and quivering with delight as they are shoved about by policemen to make way for a Santa-and-Reindeer parade as large and enthusiastic as ever marched behind a young lady that swam the channel or a young gentleman who flew the Atlantic.

Best of all, this apparent faith of the elders enables us to stretch the faith of the younger generation a year or two longer than was possible before the Lomen concern thought of providing real reindeer to make the mythical Saint more real. We used to lose such beliefs when we were five, but today the Parent-Teacher Association, the Merchants Association, the Chamber of Commerce, and the *Star* are able to stretch

the faith of Kansas City at least till seven—two years of happy unreality given to tens of thousands of children in that one city alone. And so in many other cities. Multiplying the clear gain, two years for each child, by the total number of children affected, we have an aggregate of millions of happiness-years added for this nation alone. When the fashion spreads to other countries and continues through the years, the total gain to the world will become incalculable.

Preserving the faith of children was the main purpose of the Santa campaign, but the more enterprising newspapers used the opportunity to benefit older readers as well. The Denver paper (which we will not name, for some people mistakenly consider it wrong to deceive grown-ups) erected an imitation snowhouse near where the reindeer were kept (I think it was at the municipal buildings) and employed an Eskimo, who had never before seen that sort of snowhouse except in movies, to explain to visitors that he and other reindeer herders of Alaska dwelt in that kind of snowhouse when they were at home. So far as I could judge, and I was in Denver at the time, every grown person, from Unitarian to Rotarian, swallowed that as readily as the children did the Santa part, and with as much satisfaction. Such beliefs have a moral as well as an entertainment value. It certainly makes you more content with a hall bedroom if you can visualize the Alaska Eskimos shivering in huts of snow.

But this about Alaska snowhouses and the preservation of the faith of adults, has been a digression. We must proceed with our systematic inquiry into the planned and benevolent deception of the growing child.

THE CASE OF THE GRADE SCHOOL

This little volume aims at no more than establishing a reasonable presumption either in favor of truth as opposed to deception or else in favor of deception as opposed to truth. We shall not, therefore, attempt any study of our educational system as a whole but shall take a few cases that are typical of the rest.

The Teaching of History: Under this head we shall consider two general problems and then a few specific instances.

One of those disadvantages of facts which their advocates usually admit, is that they are complicated. Another is that in most cases people cannot agree as to what the facts are. Simplification and standardization are therefore necessary, especially for the young. This is universally conceded.

Not till the prospective historian begins postgraduate work in a university does he begin to have any conception how debatable are most of the things that he has been taught as a child. The disillusionment then continues rapidly until he feels like selecting as the best definition of his specialty the one usually credited to Napoleon:

"History is a set of lies agreed upon." But (and this is significant), in spite of the high average moral tone of our populations, few historians become crusaders against history. The simplest, and I believe the correct, explanation is that they think deceiving children does them good, on the whole.

When we got into the late War, we suddenly discovered that most of our school histories were anti-British. Many of them were forthwith changed to pro-British, without a murmur from anyone except a few people who (we all agreed, as soon as they began to protest) were either pro-Germans or Pacifists. But the War, after we got into it, was so short that there was not time to oust all the anti-British propaganda from the texts, before it was over. I had the instructive experience of being in a city where a violent newspaper controversy sprang up between correspondents, some of whom advocated anti-British history but most of whom favored pro-British. The ground of the pro's was that we ought to stand by our former allies, that there might soon be another war, and that we should bring up the younger generation strong for English-speaking unity, because that was the natural basis of the coming alignment. Some argued specifically that we might be able to annex Canada if we used the same sort of histories as the Canadians and therefore grew up to the same beliefs. Even the Hearst papers, which then opposed this view and anything else that

seemed to favor the British, have since come out for the principle and now advocate an English-speaking union.

The voices, on the other hand, which suggested an impartial history were few and weak. Thus did what we believe to be the sound common sense of the people manifest itself. For next after patriotism comes a right world outlook. We must know in advance what country to favor in time of trouble. And how can the needed unanimity be secured in a democracy except by teaching the youngsters to like the right country so that they may vote correctly when they later come to decide tariffs, treaties and wars?

Much proof of what no one doubts is tedious and we have gone far enough in the argument. Certainly if you are pro-British, you will see at once that teaching love for British ideals, respect for British institutions, cannot help but benefit any country. If you are not pro-British, you can arrive at the same conclusion by substituting in the discussion the name of whatever country you most admire. Call that country X. You will then at once see the advantage of teaching the rising generation to be pro-X, or *proex* —to coin a much-needed word.

The reader may here object that even if it is agreed that history teaching in the schools should be chiefly for the purpose of laying down principles to guide us in life, it does not follow that we have to teach children to be in favor of any particular country or set of countries. Perhaps

you are a pronounced isolationist and think we are strong enough to go it alone, which strength would be increased by the solidarity we would gain if we learned in school to dislike other nations and later ran our government and shaped our private actions so as to get them all to dislike us. That is an old and much-advocated principle: that real unity can be attained only in the face of a common enemy. Very well, then, you are not a Proex but an Antex, and you must go about trying to get the schools into your hands. Let the best men win! It looks just now as if it would be the Antexes. They have captured at least one great city, Chicago, for Mayor Thompson won his campaign there on a strictly isolationist, or anti-everybody-but-us (Antex) program. No Proex (pro-British, pro-German, or other) can yet point to so substantial a political victory.

The Antexes have won the Battle of Chicago, but it may prove only a temporary victory. Desiring isolation they must themselves stand alone. Everyone who favors special friendliness to any other country must therefore necessarily be against them. That will make as many hostile factions as there are countries in the world. The cue, then, leads to that standard practice of the politicians, log rolling. The greater virtues can be apportioned to the major powers, and then the smaller virtues to the smaller powers all down the line. The caucus of the Proexes could agree that schools shall teach admiration for English common law, their representative form of govern-

ment, their sportsmanship, their literature (including the Bible which, it might seem, would go to the Jews; but Fundamentalist support can be enlisted for the contention that Jehovah, the real author, belongs to no one nation, and the rest of the argument can be swung on the ground that the King James Version is in English). The schools can then admire the French for their unbiased judgments and their volatile tempers (a little contradiction won't hurt), for their grace of manner, their dressmaking, and their cooking; the Germans can be admired for their fundamental scientific studies (which you could tone down a little, if desired, by calling them plodding instead of fundamental), their steady industry, their amenability to law and order; the Italians can be praised for their art and for the way they stamp out radicalism, the Russians for their drama and huge wolf packs . . . . and so on down to the Tierra del Fuegians, whom you might admire for living farthest South, if there happened to be no other virtue not yet assigned to some other nation.

Then, with the rightful share of space in the school books assigned, and size of adjectives prearranged, the Proexes could unite and sweep the Antexes from power.

Coming to specific problems of truth in history, we need little but a catalog to see on which side we stand. Supposing, just for argument, that the biographers of Lincoln could prove, as some of them have tried to do, that he was of

illegitimate descent, would you then want that taught in the schools? The conclusive arguments against are: (1) Such teaching would attack the Home, the most precious of all our institutions; for Lincoln is our greatest national hero, and having him illegitimate, even if only back in his parents' or grandparents' generation, would be a destructive influence. (2) That teaching would also attack the institution of National Heroes. Lincoln is our greatest hero; nothing is more beneficial than to have heroes to look up to; we would not look up to Lincoln quite so much if he were in any degree illegitimate; therefore we ought to hide the fact, if it were a fact. (3) Nothing could be gained by encouraging children to attach scandal to the names of great men. (4) It would be in bad taste to teach in school about the illegitimacy of anyone. On the basis of these and many similar reasons, all decent people will agree that the question of whether Lincoln was illegitimate should never be mentioned in the schools.

To be on the safe side, the author states here emphatically that the biographers who favor the legitimacy of Lincoln, even unto the third and fourth generation, have, in his opinion, much the best of the argument. For this book might possibly fall into the hands of minors.

It is maintained by some that it would do no harm for adults to know the fact, if it were a fact, that Lincoln was illegitimate. Their reasoning is that character is formed in infancy and

that the perverting influence of a truth, no matter how improper, is negligible in adults. We agree with that contention, and the more readily because it is in harmony with the conclusion at which we are fast arriving (a conclusion, by the way, at which you could arrive still faster with less reasoning): The purpose of child training is to build character, and all education should therefore trend toward that goal. The truth should be admitted into the curriculum or kept out of it by that test alone.

The importance of discretion in history teaching was once brought forcibly to my attention when I was spending a summer in northern Vermont, and found in use three miles away across the Canadian line in Quebec, school texts in which the War of 1812 differed so much from the same war in the Vermont histories that you would hardly believe it was the same war. You can readily see how wise that was on both sides. Imagine the discord that would be introduced into the teaching of Canadian patriotism if they used Vermont histories, and similarly what havoc a Canadian history could work, if tossed into our school system like a stone into delicate machinery. Nor is there any half-way course possible. If you were to cut out all the contradictions, there would be little left of that particular war; neither would the leavings be any good for inculcating patriotism or other moral virtues into either Canadians or Americans. Obviously things had best remain as they are.

As our last example, consider the history of that very important institution, the bath tub. Supposing it were true, as recent investigators have claimed, that the first known bath tub in the United States was not installed till 1842, that the first one in the White House was not set up till 1850, that several states passed laws forbidding them, that other states discouraged their use by heavy license fees, and that there are states in which the laws against bath tubs are unrepealed—though unenforced, like the prohibition law.

Or would you ever hint in the history courses that Sir Galahad never had a bath? That Tristram's courting, so touchingly described by Edwin Arlington Robinson, must have smelled pretty strong even at arm's length (except when the wind was just right)? That some of the most revered saints of the Church made vows never to bathe and never to be unkind to the lice that swarmed over them? And that the only two great bathing eras of known history were the ancient period which historians call the decline of the Roman Empire, when civilization was going to the dogs, and our modern period, when the Fundamentalists tell us we are all going to the Devil? Would not such teaching suggest that there may be a connection between clean bodies and unclean living? And what could be worse for æsthetics or for the soap trade?

The fact was, of course, that Tristram liked the smell of his sweetheart, and she liked his,

both being used to it, and that the sinners as well as the saints of the Middle Ages really enjoyed the stink of foul linen, calling it the Odor of Sanctity. The past was not necessarily such an unpleasant time for those who lived in it (in view of their tastes). But, even after dwelling on that, most of us will remain convinced of the superiority of our own taste, and will continue unwilling that historical studies shall in any way encourage those of our youngsters who seem to have been born with Mediæval propensities for dirt.

Indeed, what possible good end could be served by letting such facts (if they be facts) gain currency through history teaching? Would patriotism, good manners, or good morals profit by it? Would such teaching build character? Certainly not, and the present course is the right one: to say nothing about bathing in the Age of Chivalry, but to imply always that cleanliness is the natural state and passion of man—excepting rare miscreants who come to school with dirty ears.

And so we might go on, canvassing our histories and our moral, political and æsthetic judgments till we arrive at the conclusion that in school texts at least the truth needs to be very judiciously handled.

The Teaching of Physiology: If the truth be a tricky thing in history, it is no less so in many other "branches" taught in the first eight grades of school. For instance, consider physiol-

ogy. We need not dwell on sex, which most of us instinctively and rightly feel must not be thrust upon the young, but will instead continue under this head the discussion with which we ended the section on history.

Cleanliness may seem to lie in the field of æsthetics, but it has the most practical value. You would be ostracized socially if people knew you did not bathe, and you would be worse off than if you had halitosis and four-out-of-five pyorrhea. Personality courses, books on etiquette, and the efforts of the Hamilton Institute combined with Pelmanism would be of little avail to gain you preferment. Listerine could not remove the odor nor Pond's Cream make your countenance seem agreeable. So at least, we believe, and so the rising generation must be taught to believe, or cleanliness may depart from among us.

But it is now said by some of the physiologists (doubtless untruly) that nearly all the supposed scientific arguments for bathing are fictions and fallacies. *Item*: The skin does not excrete any appreciable amount of harmful substances from the body, nor do the pores "breathe." Therefore your system is not purified by "keeping the pores open" and one argument on bathing-for-health disappears. *Item*: A chief function of the skin is to protect the body; poisons, such as mercury, will not penetrate if the skin is oiled with its own secretions, but will penetrate if the natural lubricants have been washed away with warm water,

soap, or other methods. Therefore your health is, in this respect at least, the safer the less you bathe, and another of the standard arguments vanishes. *Item:* The skin's own secretions keep it softer and in better condition than any substitute yet discovered. This is a deserved pat on the shoulder for the Lord who made us, but a rather stiff jolt for the soap manufacturers. *Item*: The body odors come chiefly from three areas or parts of the body (that are too taboo for mention even here, but which you can dope out for yourself). Keeping these clean goes nine-tenths of the way toward freeing you from odors that other normal humans can detect, and changing your underwear every day, or even every other day, would go the remaining one-tenth, thus removing that argument for bathing.

And so on for many arguments more, the sum of which is that if you have a healthy skin you are safe enough in bathing if you like; if you have eczema and certain other diseases you must not bathe if you want to stop the blotches from spreading, or to sleep for the itching at night.

Now just assume, for argument's sake, that all the above (or to be conservative, say half of it), is true. Then ask yourself, would you be in favor of having little children of the dirty-ear stage find out about it? The slogan was, in the generation of our parents: "Cleanliness is next to Godliness." But the investment in soap and in the allied industries has grown faster since then than the property of the churches, and the

soaps advertise more. Today the sales talk sways the nation, and it is doubtful if godliness even approaches cleanliness in popularity. We must fight as hard, therefore, to keep such physiology out of the schools, as no fundamentalist has yet fought to keep Darwinism out of the colleges. And we shall succeed, backed as we are by the advertising funds and the publicity genius of the whole soap industry from Bon Ami to Zap.

But there is one disquieting thought: The interests of Listerine and the perfumers are opposed to those of the soap and bath towel manufacturers. Europe, too, may seek to control our cleanliness, as they do our politics, by their insidious propaganda. But, fortunately, they will be disunited. It will be England urging that odors be removed with Life Buoy against France pleading that they be covered up with Djer Kiss. These may kill each other off. Then there will be apathy and discord at home among our Napoleons of business. Some will stand aside from the struggle, for great houses, like Colgate, make both soap and perfume. The underwear manufacturers will be against both, and so will the laundries, for they will want us to get rid of odors by frequent changes of linen. The issue will be doubtful if the battle ever starts. We, the great public, having once been won over from France and the perfume to England and the tub, should try to prevent the issue from ever rising again by keeping the unæsthetic new physiology out of the schools.

Furthermore, especially as this book may fall into the hands of minors, the so-called new physiology is doubtless all wrong. So let us continue circulating the story about the page in Venice who was clothed in gold-leaf for a pageant and who died of suffocation because his pores could not breathe. Let us never forget suggesting, when we see a lad whose face is covered with pimples, that he has doubtless been neglecting his wash basin and soap. And let us soft pedal the fact, if it be a fact, that abstinence from bathing is frequently prescribed by the most expensive skin specialists.

The Teaching of Geography: The teaching of this science brings out a new consideration—the reticence customarily practised in it, while no less benevolent than in the other subjects, is based on motives new in our discussion and results in benefits of a different kind.

When facts are played down in geography teaching it is not usually because they would be in bad taste or otherwise detrimental to the character of the scholars, but rather because they are too complicated. The teachers are busy and overworked, and the pupils have limited time for the curriculum, for some of them may have to quit school soon and go to work. A complicated idea takes a long time to teach, it is hard to learn and difficult to remember and understand. From both the giving and receiving end, simplicity is therefore desirable, but facts have usually the unfortunate defect of being complicated.

In the practice of teaching it is therefore often necessary and sometimes desirable to ignore them. We can best and most sympathetically understand this if we take a case where we have been ourselves deceived, for we shall then be able to testify from personal knowledge that we have benefited, or at least that we have suffered no harm.

The best geographical example under this head is perhaps one of those upon which we touched briefly in the first section of this book—that, other things being equal, the farther north you go the colder it gets, no matter what the time of year. We shall develop that topic more fully than we did before, exploring some of its more instructive and entertaining ramifications.

First we need perspective from the history of geographical science. As in many other cases, we owe the beginnings of learning in this field to the Greeks. They may have borrowed from earlier civilizations, and probably did; but they formulated the doctrines and cast them into the moulds in which many of them are still set. One of their chief achievements was that they worked out the laws of temperature distribution over the earth substantially as we learnt them in the grade schools up to a few years ago, and roughly as they still are in the minds of the general public.

Already five hundred years before Christ, the Greeks knew that the earth was a sphere. They understood the migration of the sun northward over the earth in summer and southward in

winter between what they called, and what we still call, the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. They also determined the polar circles beyond which the sun does not rise in winter nor set in summer. This was dividing the earth into five logical zones. The Greeks and the rest of mankind lived, they said, in a zone that was temperate. But if you crossed the Mediterranean and were to travel south into Africa you would get too near the sun and come first to a section unpleasantly hot, then to one intolerable, and last to a burning region where no living thing, either plant or animal, could exist by reason of the fierce downpour of the sun's heat. This was the Torrid Zone. Going North from Greece you came similarly first to lands unpleasantly cold, then to others intolerable, and last to a permanently frozen region "where life is as impossible because of the freezing as it is in the Torrid Zone because of the burning." South of the tropics there doubtless was another temperate zone and this might be inhabited—probably was, in fact, though we should never know except by inference, as no one could ever cross the burning tropics. And at the south end of the earth would be a second frozen zone.

Thus from their doctrines of beauty, simplicity, and symmetry, and from the principles of logic the Greeks evolved laws of temperature distribution which are so easy to explain and understand that if you had never heard of them before you could have grasped both them and their necessary

implications from a description no longer nor better composed than mine that you have just read. Such a natural law is a boon to teacher and student alike. No wonder, then, that it held its ground from more than four hundred years before Christ to more than fourteen hundred years after, as John Kirtland Wright has recently proved in a long and scholarly work published by the American Geographical Society of New York: *The Geographical Lore of the Time of the Crusades.*

That we do not still have in the schools these Greek temperature laws in all their pristine simplicity is due to two of mankind's most troublesome qualities, cupidity and skepticism. In the fifteenth century Western Europe was greedy for the riches of the Far East, and the road to Cathay, traveled by Marco Polo and his predecessors and successors, had been closed by Mohammedan victories over the less bigoted Mongols. It is usually easy to disbelieve anything that crosses our desires, and so doubts began to arise as to whether the tropic lands were really burning hot and the tropic oceans boiling. Henry the Navigator gets most of the credit for cooling off the burning zone by sending out ship after ship that went farther and farther South along the West Coast of Africa, each returning with fearful tales of what they had seen or imagined, but most of them nevertheless returning and thus giving hope that others might go still farther. At last a ship did sail to where the sun

stood overhead without cooking the sailors alive. Indeed, she returned with the story that the days had not been hotter right below the sun than they were on some occasions in Portugal.

So began the "Conquest of the Tropics," and so ended the simplicity of the Greek laws of temperature distribution. Every work on meteorology of college grade now tells you that the highest temperatures registered by thermometers in the shade, under weather bureau conditions, are not recorded in the Torrid Zone at all; but in the Temperate (!) Zones. Probably the highest in-the-shade records so far taken are those of Death Valley, California, about 900 miles north of the northern edge of the Torrid Zone—136°; almost certainly the highest temperatures that can be recorded in Africa are in the Sahara Desert, also north of the tropics. If there are higher temperatures south of the Equator we feel sure they will not be near the Equator, but near the tropic of Capricorn or else (more likely) in the South Temperate Zone.

These principles are now known to all authors of text books, but they are still able to maintain a degree of simplicity in the lower school grades by implying it is average temperatures that matter, and by saying nothing about extremes. The fact is that averages count for some things and extremes for others, and that both are important. It is not, of course, the average cold of January that sometimes destroys the fruit in the South, but the one extreme night; similarly it

is not the average heat of July that kills by sunstroke in New York but the one extreme day. Extremes are really more important, in that sense, than averages; but averages are much simpler and more teachable. It is so complicated to explain and remember that extremes may be high where averages are high, that extremes may be high where averages are low, and that extremes may be low where averages are low. We would certainly have to lengthen out our school courses if we went into such hair-splitting, and our millions of potential workers would be kept out of the mills and factories even longer than they are now. Besides, the complexities of facts are bewildering and confusing to the average mind, and never give the feeling of enlightenment you have when you grasp a simple principle which throws a flood of logical light on a previously haphazard world.

It is unfortunate—or perhaps fortunate—that we have not space to go deeply into the history of the way in which the simple Greek law of temperature distribution has been gradually broken down by explorers who went to remote places and came back with stories of conditions that did not fit into the theory, and how the scientists toiled at fitting together the mosaic pieces till they finally evolved an explanation that does fit all the facts. But we must give at least a brief sketch.

The investigation that has been going on since the days of Prince Henry the Navigator started

from the simple Greek proposition: There is no cold and the greatest heat on the Equator, no extreme of either heat or cold in the North Temperate Zone, and no heat but most intense cold at the North Pole. The first slight exceptions to this had, of course, been noted long before Henry's day: The mountain tops are cold. Other discrepancies due to sea breezes, ocean currents, and many other things soon followed, but they were, on the whole, not very difficult to explain as exceptions to the rule. True enough, the altitude one was admitted to be a universal exception; mountains were conceded to be colder than their surroundings in any zone, and it became a popular saying that climbing a few feet up was like traveling a good many miles North.

All exceptions other than altitude were explained in the Middle Ages, and down to our day, as an inroad of conditions from one zone into the territory of another—the Gulf Stream warmed the British Isles because it came from the tropics, the Labrador Current cooled Newfoundland because it came from the Arctic, and so on. New Yorkers still speak of the sunstroke waves as coming from the Equator, even on occasions when the press reports few or no deaths south of Washington and the weather bureau shows that Boston is hotter than Richmond (those who think about it at all probably supposing that the heat arrives by some special conveyance through the upper atmosphere). By similar acceptance of theory and lack of reason-

ing, cold winds are still spoken of as blowing from the North Pole.

Serious trouble for the classic theory first developed when travelers came back from the Arctic with their reports. John Davis, whose name you find on the strait west of Greenland, said, for instance, that he had been far within the so-called Frozen Zone "three divers times" (1585-1588) and that he had on occasion found the weather there "as salubrious as ever I did in the Isles of De Verde"—which was going some, for those islands lie in the region supposed until Prince Henry's time (after 1400 A.D.) to be lifeless "because of the burning."

Both before and after Davis there were, however, conflicting reports from the Arctic explorers, those of the hero kind speaking (with modest reserve) only about the cold, while those of the commercial type, like Davis, dwelt on the surprising heat. On the whole there was reason for the textbook writers to side uncompromisingly with the Greeks (particularly in elementary education, where simplicity is most desirable), so long as any travelers continued to support them.

The balance was more seriously disturbed than ever before when the weather bureaus entered the field, and the U. S. Weather Bureau, for instance, began to report from Fort Yukon, Alaska, which is in the Arctic Circle, the same temperatures and humidities which kill people in New York. After that the classic simplicity of the zone in which it is "always cold" could be

maintained only by ignoring the records. This has been done with remarkable success, for the textbooks stating or plainly inferring that it is never warm in the Arctic were in extensive use in American schools for more than twenty years after the Bureau at Washington began to publish at government expense Arctic temperatures ranging up to 100° in the shade. You can verify this by going ten years back in the geographies used by the schools of your own neighborhood—not in every case, but in most.

There are some texts still in use which imply that it is never warm in the Arctic, but many have felt themselves compelled to present the following complicated explanation of Arctic summer temperatures (after stating that the old law does hold for three-quarters of the year): Practically all the heat comes from the sun, some arriving at any given spot directly and some transported there by various agencies, such as winds, ocean currents. The amount of heat delivered straight from the sun to a unit of the earth's surface on a summer day depends primarily on how nearly vertical the sun is and for how many hours it shines; but secondarily it depends on other factors, such as clouds or dust in the atmosphere, the color of the surface the light rays strike, and so on. The resulting temperature, as observed either by a thermometer or by the human sensory organs, is further modified by how long a night, during which heat was lost, has preceded the day, and by how much "cold"

was stored in that locality by the preceding winter. In some places that are mountainous, such as Greenland, this winter chill has been effectively stored in the form of snow, which not only throws back the light rays without giving them a chance to turn into heat but also neutralizes those that have become heat by using them to lessen its own cold; other places, such as the ocean, have stored the "cold" effectively, too, and cancel the heat of the summer with great success. Therefore it is never very hot on mountains in the Arctic, nor on the ocean; and it is probable that if you spent a summer in a tent on an ice floe at the North Pole you would never observe a temperature higher than twenty degrees above freezing (say 50° or 55° F.) measured five feet above the ice, though it would of course be much hotter if you put up a windbreak and then let the sun shine on a dark tarpaulin spread on the floe.

But there are in the Arctic, the explanation would continue, thousands of square miles of low land not very near either to mountains or to the sea. Over these it is far colder in winter than at the North Pole (because the air above the Pole is warmed by the heat radiated by the ocean up through the floating ice). The winter winds are therefore frequently warmer when they blow from the North than from some other direction, and in some places the coldest winds are southerly. This extreme cold makes a heavy precipitation impossible, and the average snowfall of

the Arctic lowlands for twelve months is therefore less than the average snowfall of Virginia or Scotland. This little snow dissolves quickly in the spring, and after that the sunlight strikes a dark surface, which helps it turn into heat. Nor is there much cold stored anywhere near that can become effective to neutralize the sun. What cold had been stored up by the snow is gone, except as it is held in a little water on or near the surface, and what has been taken up by the ground through last winter, and through the centuries, is securely imprisoned there. For after the first few inches near the surface thaw, they become an insulating blanket that confines the rest of the chill and makes it as powerless to affect the temperature of the air as if it were hundreds of miles away.

On the Arctic prairie that is remote from mountains or the sea, one factor, therefore, far overshadows all others in determining how hot any given day shall be. This is the quantity of heat received each hour from the sun at that place, multiplied by the number of hours. Now, at the Equator the sun can deliver heat no more than twelve hours out of every twenty-four, giving the tropical prairie an equal length of time in which to cool off. But north of the Arctic circle the sun shines the whole twenty-four hours, delivering less heat per hour than at the Equator, but more per day, and without any night in which to cool off. There is, accordingly, a period in Summer, varying in length according to where

in the Arctic you are, during which the sun delivers to your locality more heat per day than it does at the Equator. *This is the rule,* for it is based on the broadest principles; the places where it does not work out are exceptions, for narrower or special reasons. And it is a fact that there are many places on and near the Equator where the hottest day in a hundred years does not equal the hottest days of the same century at many places in the Arctic that are equally high above sea level.

Few will deny the interest of the preceding facts; but, says the really sensible man, the world is full of interesting things, and we certainly have not room for them all in the textbooks, nor time for them all in the schools. The practical value of this curious Arctic lore is very small to the average man, who stays at home or, at the most, goes to Paris; though it is undeniably highly useful to those few individuals who travel to the Arctic and who want to know in advance what sort of weather to expect, warning them to take fly dope instead of furs if they are going on a Midnight Sun excursion to Fort Yukon. But even for the excursionist, facts are not an unmixed blessing. If you know about the heat and the mosquitoes in advance, you will not have the pleasure of discovering them; the fly dope may save you from stings, but it also spoils the after-dinner value of the tale about how foolish you were and how badly instructed *before you went North,* which sort of story is the only really

satisfactory way of putting your listeners both firmly and pleasantly in the places where they belong, among the uninstructed. And even from their point of view, too much advance knowledge is rather a bore, for what is the drawing room value of that which everybody has learned in school when compared with: "Jones, you know, the Famous Traveler, told me once that when he was in the Yukon, etc."

Facts are tedious, anyhow, and we should think carefully before agreeing that the simple and edifying Greek rule shall go by the board. Consider just a few of the entertaining and instructive things, some of them with no mean character-building value, that would have to go, too.

Item: All the ideas would have to go that are similar to the familiar kindergarten ditty that has been sung by millions of little Americans and which goes something like this (there seems to be no standard version):

> "Dear Little Eskimo,
> In your house of ice and snow."

and so on, till the final line:

> "For in Greenland there is nothing
> green to grow!"

We might be able to salvage the snowhouse temporarily, though it is a bothersome fact that of something over 14,000 Eskimos in Greenland, by the last census, less than 300 had ever seen a snowhouse. But the "nothing green to

grow" would not last very long under the combined attack of the unromantic geographers, who insist on pointing out weather bureau records, and the historians of Greenland, who will tell you that the country was a republic from 986 A.D. to 1261 (a good deal longer than the United States has yet been a republic) and a dependency of Norway and Denmark thereafter; that they had churches and monasteries administered from European archbishoprics (you may have seen the Greenlandic church ruins in the movies some years ago, as background for the King of Denmark hobnobing with Eskimos). The historians will point out that a European civilization could not have existed in Greenland during the Middle Ages except for stock raising. The colonists had cattle, with as many as a hundred head in a single barn. They lived in considerable part on milk and milk products, and wove cloth from their own sheep, making garments which you can examine today through photographs in many books or study in the museum collections of Europe. Both cattle and sheep raising are now again practiced in Greenland, and have been for many decades. That means hay, and hay means meadows with that "something green to grow" which is denied by the kindergarten.

Such are the facts, but what of it? If we pressed them upon children while they were at the impressionable age, we would so change their mental picture of Greenland as to rob it of every charm it has so long had for us. What

substitute would they find for the delicious thrills and chills that creep up and down our spines as we look with the mind's eye upon a world of permanent white silence and peer into Greenlandic snowhouses where Eskimos shiver (doubtless without their teeth chattering, else it would not be so silent) as they devour (again silently) the blubber that enables them to eke out their miserable existence. And then there is the character-building value of thinking what a marvelous thing is the human spirit that continues its fight against the powers of darkness and cold even up there on the frozen edge of the world. On the other hand, too, how fortunate we are who live in a country of warmth and green grass—and schools. Take away, if you must, the good old picture of the North that is always cold; but consider first what it is you are going to give our disillusioned children in its stead. Surely it will have to be something better than cow pastures and a few ruined churches. We already have at home enough of the one and nearly enough of the other.

Teaching Through Educational Movies: While our love for children makes us conceal from them anything that may be injurious to their welfare, the same affection leads us to strive for their instruction in whatever we consider beneficial. But in this field we are sometimes misled. I have in mind a special case, parents who were greatly incensed at a movie Called *Nanook of the North,* which, although

not true to the native life of the Eskimos, had been shown in their children's school and recommended as true. But these parents were quite in the wrong, as will appear.

To begin with, the *Nanook* story was at least as true as that of Santa Claus, which those parents approved. It was the same sort of partial truthfulness, only greater. Real as well as Santa reindeer have horns, four legs, and are driven before sleighs in harness, though not such sleighs, quite, nor in such harness as the ordinary Christmas pictures show. They run on the ground, not through the air; they are very swift, though not quite so speedy as Santa's. There are in the world old men, too, who would like to give a present to every child at Christmas if they could, though there is no old man that actually succeeds in doing it. Thus the Santa story, while fiction in a way, does represent truths.

Similarly with the movie, *Nanook*. There are Eskimos in Hudson Bay where the picture was taken, and the people you see on the screen are Eskimos, which is more realism, right from the start, than you have ever had in a Santa Claus picture. The country you see, too, is the real Hudson Bay. True enough, not even the coldest month up there averages as cold as the *Nanook* tells you the whole year averages (35° below zero), but then you must have something exceptional in a movie or it would not impress. You are told, too, that the Hudson Bay Eskimos still hunt with their primitive weapons, and this is

justified. For it would spoil the unity of the picture to tell the truth about the weapons, though it is an interesting fact in itself that the forefathers of the Eskimos shown on the screen have had guns for generations, as the Hudson's Bay Company has been trading into the Bay since 1670. Moreover the titles do not actually say that the Bay Eskimos hunt with primitive weapons *only,* so you can take it any way you like. Doubtless the producer meant nothing more than to say that the children (who are certainly Eskimos) still play at hunting (which would be hunting of a sort) with bows and arrows.

No real Eskimos, in my belief, ever hunted seals through the ice in the manner shown in the picture, nor do I think a seal could be killed by that method unless he were a defective. But it is true that certain Eskimos in other parts of the Arctic (about half of all there are) do know how seals can be killed through ice. That the Hudson Bay Eskimos, with whom our producer had to deal, did not know such methods was no fault of his, and he would have been deficient in resource if he had allowed that to stop him. Neither are there libraries in Hudson Bay where he might have borrowed a book that described the method so he could have studied it up and taught it to the local natives. There they were, the picture had to be taken, and audiences in the South would demand to be shown what they had heard of—Eskimos sealing through the ice. And so a method was developed (perhaps by the Eskimos themselves

along lines roughly indicated by the director) which photographs beautifully and gives as much feeling of enlightenment to an audience as if it showed the real technique that does secure seals.

I have gone to *Nanook* many times for the purpose of observing the audiences. In several cases some movie fan has noticed that the seal ostensibly speared in the picture is stiff and dead, clearly planted there. But that, it seems to me, is all the realism you could expect in a play. You would not demand that Fairbanks really kill all his adversaries, though you do appreciate seeing a bit of good swordsmanship. And in *Nanook,* what seal but a dead one could possibly be expected to allow himself to be speared in the manner shown?

Another thing I have overheard *Nanook* audiences complain about is that they had heard somewhere that Eskimo snowhouses are warm and comfortable inside, while the *Nanook* picture shows the occupants shivering as they strip for going to bed, and there are clouds of steam puffing from their mouths and nostrils. These erudite fans are still more troubled when they see the movie title which says that the Eskimos must always keep their snowhouse interiors below freezing to prevent them from melting, for they have read a book by someone who has lived in a snowhouse and who has explained the principles of physics by which, when the weather is cold enough outside (and no weather was ever quite so cold as the *Nanook* country is supposed to be),

the snow does not melt though it is comfortably warm inside—say, as warm as the average British or Continental living rooms in winter. But the answer is simple, and the producer is quite justified by it: An Eskimo snowhouse is too small for the inside photography, and the light might not be good enough. So to get the best light and plenty of room for the cameraman, half the house was cut away (like the "sets" you see in the movie studios), and the poor Eskimos were disrobing and going to bed out of doors. But it would have spoilt the picture to introduce such technical details. Hence the producer had to explain the shivering people and their visible breathing by the harmless pretence that snowhouse interiors have to be colder than freezing to prevent the walls and roof from thawing.

And so on for the whole picture.

It was the very fact just stated and others like them which made my friends angry. That may have been because the realities of the picture were not so charitably interpreted to them as we have done above. It is possible to make the same facts look a good deal worse if you try.

But no charity is needed, and only a proper understanding of the case, to reconcile any parent to a movie like *Nanook* and to its presentation in the school. For the Eskimo, properly understood, is really the grown-up's Santa Claus. We love the world of the imagination. Santa, fat, jolly and generous, portrays certain things and qualities as we would like them to be. But

in the world of fancy we need contrasts; ugliness as well as beauty, wickedness as well as goodness. For the proper effect, we need not only Heaven, but Hell also. It may be pleasant to think how fortunate you will be if you go to Heaven, but that is nothing compared to the satisfaction you get from a reasonable prospect of being able to keep out of Hell.

What we mean, then, is that the Eskimo is really a sort of reversed Santa; and that since Hell has begun to fade, the Arctic is our best substitute. For somehow grown people, even those who cannot visualize Hell, seem to be able to believe not only that Hudson Bay is in the Arctic but also that the Arctic averages thirty-five degrees below zero, as the picture says the Hudson Bay country does, and that it has all the other distressing attributes.

In fact, the Arctic, peopled by Eskimos, is much more practical for our purposes than any inferno ever was when peopled by tormented spirits. No picture of spirits ever gets us like one of a wretched flesh-and-blood Eskimo who shivers from one year's end to the other. Away up there, crouched in his foul, unventilated house, drinking oil, he has a power to make us remarkably contented with poor lodgings, a careless landlord, and meals at Child's. In our little backyard with its one wretched tree we think with a pleasant compassion of the stunted little Arctic Mongol who has never seen even a bush. And then, to make his usefulness com-

plete, we remember in summer when we are perishing with the heat that Nature has her compensations! She mercifully sees to it that her chilled children of the snows shall at least escape sunstroke and the after effects of too much coca-cola.

And how could you get these and other similar benefits from the Eskimo and the Arctic if you did not encourage such pictures as *Nanook of the North*, and the books that correspond? And what better time than the impressionable years of childhood in which to acquire these ideas that are going to have such high consolatory and moral values later?

Perhaps, Gentle Reader, you had arrived at the truth about Truth before you saw this treatise. If so, you will know, or you may have guessed by the trend of this enquiry, that neither side is going to have it all its own way. At first Truth (in the sense of facts) seemed to be getting the worst of it, being so frequently immaterial, inexpedient, even immoral, and nearly always in such bad taste. But the last argument from geography has shown the merits divided, with, generally speaking, the "practical" advantages in favor of the facts, but the idealistic ones against them. We are likely to feel here an immediate concern that in a crass and materialistic age the "practical" side will prevail. Not necessarily, for we may be able to show the higher practicality of idealism.

We will admit now, partly to save the trouble of a formal canvass, that the rest of the argument from the schools is going to go, on the whole, against us; or, rather, against the conclusions deduced. The fact is, our position is not really at all what it has seemed to be, for we keep another, and so far unhinted, solution in reserve.

A Glance Over the Other Studies: A critical study of psychological teaching would not go against the preceding conclusions from history, physiology, geography, and the educational movies, but in fact decidedly in their favor, more especially as the newer developments have tended so strongly toward an undesirable, and, in fact, degrading materialism. Psychoanalysis and especially behaviorism come near being a total loss from the point of view of character building. But chemistry has scarcely any bad aspects unless you happen to be a pacifist, objecting to gunpowder and poison gas. But even so, what is that when measured against soap, a product of chemistry on which rests that perfect cleanliness revered today even beyond godliness. Physics, too, is on the right side, especially those theories of it that are either so puzzling that the ordinary man can make nothing of them, or else are clear in statement but seemingly lead to impossible conclusions—which can, nevertheless, be experimentally verified. For it is so valuable to be able to lay one's hands some-

where on views that seem either silly or impossible and can nevertheless be proved. Reasoning from them gives such force to analogous religious views which it does not happen to be possible to verify.

Going ahead thus to canvass the rest of the grade school and high school sciences (for we have inadvertently progressed on our argument a little beyond the grades before we knew it) we shall come to the provisional conclusion that about forty per cent of the truths of education are good and should continue to be encouraged, about forty per cent are bad and should be ignored or suppressed, and the remaining twenty per cent are all right in themselves but too complicated and should be reserved for those who continue their education into the universities.

Since our love and care prompt us to make the education of our children their best and most logical preparation for the life which we admire, it is not really necessary for our present examination to go beyond the common and high schools, for they are a sort of abstract or synopsis of the world as we both think it is and want it to be. Still it will do no harm to take another case or two.

In politics, for instance, would you want the whole truth told about every candidate? You can test that out with a few simple reactions. When it was whispered around, for instance, that Harding was partly of negro descent, was it your first inclination to try to discover if the charge were true or not? On the contrary, you almost certainly took no thought of truth or

falsehood, but were offended and angered by the bad taste and poor sportsmanship of whoever it was that started the yarn. In the case of Wilson, would you have favored it (even as a Republican) if there had been openly circulated some of the things which (as a Republican) you firmly believed about him? Bad sportsmanship again, and bad taste; you would not have done it and are glad no one did. Even in the case of so innocent a thing as Roosevelt's bad eye, said to have resulted from a boyish sparring bout, would you, as a Democrat this time, have favored any campaign use of it whatsoever? Once more, bad sportsmanship, bad taste, an emphatic no.

In the August, 1927, number of *Harper's Magazine* Dr. Joseph Collins, famous as a physician in all literary circles, has an article on *Should Doctors Tell the Truth?* It will not take a reading of that article, nor anything but a backward glance of the mind over our own experiences, to make us agree with him when he says: "The longer I practice medicine the more I am convinced that every physician should cultivate lying as a fine art." Nor do we quarrel with the general conclusion that while a physician should tell the truth in certain cases, lying is usually the kinder, the safer, and therefore the better way.

And what of the everyday social relations that are more important than our business or professional contacts to most of us? Consider the one remark: "How well you are looking!" Can

you imagine the sort of a place this world would be if that little exclamatory sentence, or its equivalent, were not working over time in every country? I know my own case. Ever since I can remember the declaration: "You are looking better than when I saw you last," has cheered me greatly. It was not till a year or two ago that it first struck me that if this had been uniformly true all these years I ought to be looking remarkably well by now. But even so, I am still able to take a little comfort in this serial fiction.

In view of the benevolent nature of the many sample reticences we have considered, all of which and many more like them are sure of a heavy vote in their favor could this nation, or any other civilized country, be polled on the subject —in view of this and much more that could be said in favor, is it not rather strange that most of us have allowed ourselves to fall victims to that cynical outlook on life which considers the deceiver, almost necessarily, wicked? You see how absurd that is, particularly if you think back over the cases of your own deception. As a child you may have deceived your parents occasionally to get out of a licking; but far oftener, I am sure, you did it to save their feelings, so they would not be offended or worried—on the well-known and sound principle that "what you don't know don't hurt you." And, in later life, was it not usually the same? In school you bluffed partly for marks, of course, but very

often, almost oftener than you realized, to save the feelings of a kindly teacher who trusted you and would have been so disappointed had he known. In married life, too, you deceive, oftener than not (I am sure the married will agree) to save the feelings of the other party. In fact, the conjugal relation calls for the highest known percentage of benevolent reticence. There are, for instance, certain situations that do not seem to irk the technically aggrieved parties, even when they know about them, so long as they are able to keep up the appearance of not knowing. And what is more, that public which always takes an interest in the marriage relations of other people, thinks it all right for the deceived party to know about the dereliction and still do nothing, so long as he does not know that the public knows he knows.

In fact, next in importance after the systematic deception of children by parents, comes the amiable deception of husband and wife by each other. That is not only in the nature of things, but proper according to the highest standards, since the family is the social unit and the home the strong citadel of our institutions.

CONCLUSION

We have now come to a point where we can survey the whole ground and draw reasonable conclusions from the facts set down. The irresistible main decision is against the rest of the

philosophers and against all their philosophy. This is as it should be; for what would be the profit of a new philosophy if it failed to destroy the old? The philosophers may, of course, rise to counter-attack; but what do we reck of that? For we have the public with us, since we have come to a conclusion which justifies what they always have done, what they dearly love doing, and what they are at heart convinced is right—though they did not know it, any more than the perfect athlete knows how he balances when he walks.

The conclusion is, then, that like religion, truth is neither good nor bad. There are good religions and bad religions, good truths and bad.

Generally, though, or at least more often than not, truth is, in practice, bad—especially in the fields of æsthetics, ethics, morals, character building, and business (which last we have not stopped to argue since it is so self-evident).

We pointed out in the first section of this book the necessary imperfection of all the sciences except mathematics. Since nothing is true there by observation or by any evidence, but merely by agreement, it is obvious that truth in mathematics need never be bad—since we do not have to agree on it if we do not like it, and nothing is bad unless it is something we do not like.

Though we have not covered the field exhaustively, we may agree that truth is good, ususally, in engineering, chemistry, physics, and the allied sciences. It is good in astronomy and geology whenever it does not conflict with religion. It

is good about as often as bad in sociology, psychology, physiology, biology, and several of the related sciences, for in these it appears to support present-day manners, current morals and the prevalent religion about half the time. In history, civics and many such fields it is always open to the gravest suspicion. In the training of very young children it should be rather carefully avoided as a general thing.

THE NECESSARY REFORMS

Having arrived at this conclusion, we must profit by it. At first sight it will seem that, since we have found the truth bad as often as not, the thing to do would be to proclaim our emancipation from its tyranny. But that would be forgetting the more important part of our findings—the benevolent nature and salutary effects of at least a good half of all the deception there is. How could you carry on a Santa Claus campaign, or remain happily married, if you said openly that you were going to deceive whenever you thought it best? It is only in prestidigitation, where "the quickness of the hand deceives the eye," that you can safely tell people that you are going to fool them. In spiritualist seances, in praying for rain, or in forecasting a year without a summer, what effect do you suppose you would produce if you said to everybody that you were doing everything for its mere psychological effect on them?

We can well take our pointer as to what to

do from a famous general who has announced publicly that he is going to explain in a book just how he himself and his associates invented and circulated some of the most effective (or outrageous) lies of the Great War. In connection with this announcement he has had two things to explain, and he has made an explanation that is not only satisfactory in his case but admirably suited to broader uses.

Asked how he could, without shame, admit such lies as he proposed to admit, he replied in substance that if you are justified in using shrapnel, poison gas, torpedoes from submarines and bombs from airships, you are justified in using any means at all. The main concern is to make the nation at home and the soldiers in the field a unit for the war, and you cannot do that unless you at least convince them that there is good reason to fight. The more convinced they are the better they will fight, and what propaganda does is to make them more convinced. This argument is so familiar that it deserves no further amplification.

The General's second defense was against the accusation that he had said himself that he expected another war within twenty-five years from the last, and that such a war could not be won without propaganda. How, then, did he justify himself in giving away his country's secrets of just how its citizens were fooled in the last war? His reply was that the remedy would be very simple. All you had to do was to say:

"Yes, quite right; we fooled you in the last war. But times have changed and that sort of thing would not work now. Besides, we would not fool you even if it served our ends, we have become so honorable." Having said this, you could go ahead and fool them not only with the old methods but, in some cases, with the very same tale. All you will have to do in the last case is to explain: "The story which we invented in the last war must have given the enemy the idea, for now they are actually doing what we then accused them of."

We may well adapt the General's ideas to a wider field. The leaders of thought among us must continue to proclaim their devotion to Truth, in order that they may be able to get people to believe and act upon those things that are for the general welfare.

The conclusions and recommendations at which we have arrived will receive informal support from most thoughtful and all public spirited persons. But will that be enough, especially in view of the solid front presented by the old-school philosophers, who still hold that the Good is the same as the True, and that the True is whatever corresponds to facts? It should be enough, for we have an initial advantage in the cogency and popular appeal of our reasoning. By considering the very same facts as the old philosophers, but merely selecting them more judiciously and approaching them from the opposite, or scientific, angle (of reasoning from facts

to principles), we have discovered (what has long been instinctively felt) that many facts are bad; and have demonstrated that the Good cannot be synonymous with every kind of fact, for that would make good synonymous with bad, which is nonsense. The Good, we have thus demonstrated, has no necessary relation to facts at all, but is ultimately determined by the sound instincts of the majority.

The ancients, it seems, anticipated our findings in a measure; but that is natural, and strengthens our position, for we are only trying to go back to the first principles of Nature, and they understood Nature better than we, being closer to her and yielding a freer rein to their instincts. They expressed their conclusion in the saying that "The voice of the people is the voice of God." The triumph of the same idea was poetically forecast by Tennyson when he spoke of an epoch in which "The common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe."

Can we secure the triumph which Tennyson foresaw, the need of which we have shown, without a special organization to attain it? Pondering the question, it does not seem that we need any wholly new organization, but rather a federation of those existing agencies that believe in acting on our principle—the principle of the sound common sense of the majority. Consider what we have to start with: The Fundamentalists would take care of religion, the American Legion would see to patriotism, the Anti-Saloon

League, the W. C. T. U., and similar organizations would look after the prohibition of alcoholics (and later no doubt, other prohibitions, as needed); the Society for the Suppression of Vice, the Watch and Ward Society, and their kind, would protect our literary and other morals. And so on through the list.

Of course it will never do for the benevolent organizations to continue acting separately, each for its own end. They must unite. The Fundamentalists must agree to support the Legion on patriotism, the Legion must return the favor by a united Anti-Darwinism, both must get behind the next Clean Books Bill, and so on till every organization to promote the common good has the support of every other.

Such union will be strength, but there will be more power in reserve that may be called on when needed. Suppose, for instance, that the schools are threatened. The toy makers, the printers of fairy tales, and the educational movie people will see to it that Noah and his Ark remain in our religion, Jack and the Beanstalk in our folklore, and the permanently frozen Arctic in our geographies. The politicians will arrange that the histories shall continue to be reticent and the soapmakers will look out that the physiology of the skin does not get too far. Back of all such individuals, corporations, or groups, will be the sound good taste of the community, which will take care that mere facts shall not lead us too far astray.

PSYCHE

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